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ABSTRACT

According to Wales and Stager, Guided Design is an instructional strategy built on an eclectic integration of psychological principles and viewpoints, which incorporates the learning principles of practice, modeling, organizations, and reinforcements; capitalizes on the motivational principles of affiliation, achievement and self-actualization; and focuses on the use of inductive reasoning within the group setting. The effectiveness of guided design as an instructional technique in applied social or consumer psychology was evaluated with 17 subjects who were exposed to a three-hour problem involving decisions about advertising. The results revealed no significant differences between the exam performances on guided design questions as compared to lecture-related questions. Subjects thought that 40% of the course should be composed of guided design projects. Findings suggested that the guided design was no more or less effective than the lecture approach for the transmission of knowledge and that a preference for guided design activity appeared related to both group productivity and group cohesiveness. (Author)

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Experience in Decision Making for Students of Social and Industrial Psychology: A Guided Design Project in Industrial Consulting

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The developers of the guided design strategy for instruction propose guided design is a useful approach for directing learning in many types of courses. The emphasis is on decision making within the group setting. Rather than lecture, the instructor manages the learning experience providing a model of appropriate decision making (Wales and Stager, 1977).

The purpose of the present study was the development and evaluation of a guided design project. The project concerned decision making as a social psychologist consultant to industry. It was hypothesized that Ss would prefer the guided design approach to the extent that they felt productive and felt satisfied with the group membership. It was also hypothesized that learning and retention of material would be superior to the lecture approach to instruction.

Method

Subjects

The Ss were 17 male and female students enrolled in a social psychology course. While 17 subjects were involved in the performance comparison, only 14 responded to the questionnaire.

Procedure and Materials

Ss were placed in four groups with four or five members each. The guided design project was administered over two separate one and one-half hour periods.

After completion of the project Ss were asked to respond to the following questions:

(1) What portion or percentage of a course should be devoted to the guided design approach?

(2) How would you evaluate the productivity of your group?
Very Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very High

(3) How successful was your group in coming up with viable solutions?
Not Successful 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very Successful

(4) Evaluate the difficulty of the guided design project.
Not Difficult 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very Difficult

(5) Were you satisfied with the people with whom you were working?
Not Satisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very Satisfied

In addition to the opinion questionnaire, Ss were tested for retention of the content. Questions matched for difficulty came from both the three hours of lecture and the three hour guided design project.

Results

A comparison of the test performance on guided design questions as opposed to lecture related questions revealed no statistically significant difference (Sandler A = 1.11, df = 16, where a value of .268 or less was required for significance at .05 level). The group missed an average of 11.2 points on the lecture related questions while they missed an average of 12.4 points on the guided design questions.

A Pearson correlation revealed a significant relationship between questions 1 and 2 ($r = .48$, df = 14, p of .07), and a statistically significant relationship between questions 1 and 5 ($r = .52$, df = 14, p of .05). Correlation of question 1 with questions 3 and 4 revealed r's of .22 and .25, respectively.

Discussion and Conclusions

An examination of the results reveals no superiority for guided design or lecture approaches to instruction. From these results, it may be concluded that, for this instructor at least, both approaches are equally valid for the transmission of knowledge. Whether these similarities in performance will persist across time has yet to be determined.

In regard to the motivational dimensions of guided design, it does appear that motivation will vary with one's satisfaction with the group members and group productivity. Members who were satisfied with the membership and their productivity tended to recommend a larger amount of time be devoted to guided design activities. This finding is consistent with the hypothesis that guided design has the potential for providing more opportunities for the satisfaction of achievement and belonging needs.

In conclusion, guided design might provide an equally effective alternative to lecturing which has the potential for satisfying several needs of the membership not always provided in the lecture situation. Further testing is needed, however, so that a clearer delineation of the relevant group and individual variables might be made.

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The Perplexed Peanut Butter Producer:
A Guided Design Problem

Introduction

The material you are about to use is concerned with decision-making, a basic intellectual process which makes it possible for each of us to face and solve new problems. This material is organized in an "Instruction-Feedback" pattern so you can participate in the solution of the problem. Each instruction presents a question the social psychologist students raised about one step in the decision-making process. We suggest that each member of your group read each Instruction, discuss it with your team, decide on a group response, and then compare the decision with the printed Feedback which your teacher will provide. This Feedback offers a summary of what your group has probably discussed and presents the decision made by the students. You should realize that the purpose of the printed Feedback is to allow everyone to compare their reasoning with that of other people. No one should feel that they have to accept any of these decisions.

Each group should appoint a secretary to record the decisions made by his or her teammates. When the group feels they have completed their answer to the Instruction, ask the teacher to come to the group to check the work or have the secretary take the record to the teacher. If the teacher believes the work is acceptable, the secretary will receive copies of the Feedback and the next Instruction to give to the group. If the work is not yet acceptable, the teacher may ask questions to stimulate further thinking.

The Request

A lazy summer afternoon finds our perennial student contemplating his naval and, generally, enjoying a brief respite from the demands of his college studies. While resting upon the couch, he heard a loud clamoring outside the living room window. This sound he had come to associate with the return of his father, a sound which had become more unpleasant as the summer passed. Indeed, it did seem as though his father was growing more insistent each day with his demand that the student find gainful employment.

Father entering

"Well, I have finally found a way for you to earn your keep," the father said with some irritation in his voice.

Student

In a rather condescending voice, the student replied "What is it that

you would have me do to earn my 'keep'? Would you have me sell popcorn at the little league game or do you have something more sinister in mind? After all, my dearest pater, you must realize that psychology majors are not in demand in the employment market. Perhaps later, after I achieve a doctorate and complete a post doctorate, I'll be ready for employment. That should take no more than ten or twelve years. Please continue to be the sweet and understanding 'daddy' you have always been."

Father

In a rather loud and defensive voice, "No, I'm not falling for any more of your softsoaping. You're going to listen to this man's offer and that is final!"

Student with irritation obvious

"Ok already, bring him in so that I can hear his offer"

Executive is summoned by the father and enters the room.

Executive

"Young person I have been told that you are studying social psychology and, if this is so, you might be able to help me."

Student in a controlled voice

"Yes, I am studying social psychology."

Man in response

"Great! I need some advice from an objective person like yourself."

Student

"Please continue."

Executive

"I'm a producer of peanut butter and I have recently developed a new sandwich Spread. My problem is, I don't know whether to advertise or not. Several advertising firms have said that it is crucial that I do so if I plan to grow or even hold on to my share of the market. In the past, I have used display advertisements but I have not found it necessary to use the television media. You are a psychologist, could you tell me if TV advertisement is effective. Is it worth the cost? I don't trust these advertising firms!"

Instruction A -- Identify the problem.

What is the problem? Go beyond what is being said to discover the main social psychological and marketing issues. What other information do you need?

Feedback A

A_1 -- The problem

The owner of this company is confronted with a conflict. On the one hand, he appears to be satisfied with the promotional approach he has used in the past. However, advertising representatives have been successful in creating a great deal of cognitive dissonance. He is now afraid that he might be "missing the opportunity" to make better profits. This thought coupled with the fear that he might lose what he has gained has aroused him to action. Because he realizes that advertisers have a vested interest in selling their "goods," he wants an objective or "outside" opinion.

A_2 -- Information needed

1. The psychology student would want to know the extent of competition. Has it been stable or has it increased recently?

2. Does the owner have any information on the cost effectiveness of the 'in the store' display advertisements?

3. How much money would the owner be willing to invest in advertising itself?

4. How dispersed is the target market?

5. Does the owner have any demographic or psychographic data for the target market?

Instruction B

Through careful interviewing, under the watchful eye of his father, the student acquires the following information.

1. The competition has recently increased its efforts to "steal" the peanut butter market.

2. As far as the store display costs are concerned, the owner has evidence of a linear relationship between cost and sales up to about 30% of the selling price.

3. The owner has adequate funding for a mass media exposure.

4. His market is limited to the southeastern states.

5. Demographic and psychographic data are available. In general, the purchasers of this brand of peanut butter tend to be a heterogeneous lot but with some propensity toward being indifferent to the purchase

of peanut butter. They tend to be convenience shoppers, i.e., they are looking to spend the least amount of time and effort in their purchasing.

State the Basic Objective

The Basic Objective focuses your thoughts on the real problem to be solved. It should be a statement that is broad enough so no reasonable possible solution is eliminated.

Feedback B

Our student decides that the main goal of this project is that of providing the peanut butter executive with a realistic appraisal of the effectiveness of advertising. Since the student has been trained in the scientific tradition, he believes that he must also design a study to evaluate the effectiveness of advertising should the executive decide to try it.

Instruction C -- State the Constraints, Assumptions, and Facts

Constraints are factors which limit the outcome of the project and cannot be changed. Assumptions are applied to factors which can be changed to simplify the problem and make it solvable. Facts are statements of things that are known.

Feedback C

At this point, our student has decided that he had better seek some assistance from his friends. Luckily, two fellow psychology majors lived in his home town and were just itching to have some intellectual stimulation. They all agreed that the local pub would be an ideal spot to do their heavy "thinking."

After an hour of heavy thinking and some little drinking, the dynamic trio were ready to get down to business. In fact, our first student commented. "We may as well get to work, there isn't going to be any action in here today." Upon receiving agreement with his hypothesis, the trio set to work.

First Student

"Since we know that our goal is to provide our sage advice regarding the efficacy of television advertising, I suggest that we list the facts, constraints, and assumptions."

Second Student

"Well the facts are fairly clear.

1. According to the peanut butter executive, in-the-store ads have been effective but there appears to be a point beyond which additional advertisement dollars will have little influence.
2. At this point, the market is primarily regional in size.
3. Competition has been increasing.
4. And people buying this product are, in general, convenience shoppers."

Third Student

"Let's assume that our executive is genuinely receptive to any rational plan."

First Student

"I believe the only constraint is that an interim decision must be made."

Instruction D

Generate possible solutions using your common sense and any other information or device at your disposal. What are the prevailing opinions regarding the ways advertising might work?

Feedback D

The dynamic trio pooled all their resources and came up with the following hypotheses regarding the effectiveness of advertising.

First Student

"Some people claim that advertising works by sustaining or confirming brand loyalty. That is, they are saying that advertising may not elicit new behavior, but it can keep old habits intact."

Second Student

"Yes, I have heard that hypothesis, but others claim that advertising is actually useful in eliciting trial behavior. It is asserted that this is especially true when a preferred brand is unavailable."

Third Student

"I like the hypothesis that asserts that advertising is important in directing behavior in non-critical or low involvement situations."

First Student

"A fourth hypothesis states that advertising is important for communicating to opinion leaders who influence other people."

Third Student

"Some even attribute a more sinister quality to advertising when they claim that it could modify central attitudes."

First Student

"On the other hand, some would claim that it does not work at all."

Second Student

"Finally, last but not least, some assert that advertising works at the rational level providing education for buyers."

Instruction E -- Provide theoretical rationale for those hypotheses

First Student

"I think that we need to determine if these hypotheses have any theoretical support. Are they "real" explanations or only rationalizations?"

Discuss theories and models from which the before mentioned hypotheses might be deduced

E_1 -Generate theories or models to explain the brand loyalty hypothesis. Work only on this hypothesis.

Feedback E_1

First Student

"The confirmation of brand loyalty hypothesis, could have a Cognitive Dissonance explanation. If people wish to see themselves as adequate problem solvers, then confirmation of this would be pleasant and disconfirmation would create a state of tension or cognitive dissonance. Advertisers provide, through communications, the cognitive elements that are consonant with the persons self-concept. In effect, they reassure brand users that they are correct in their product choice. Furthermore, they offset the dissonant elements which are forthcoming from the competitors advertisements."

Second Student

"I agree that advertisements may work to promote consonance and prevent dissonance, but I think McGuire's Inoculation Theory has some revelance here. As you know, it has been demonstrated that attitudes can be kept intact by providing supportive arguments as well as counter arguments. Perhaps advertising serves to provide me with the proper defense. Or it may even motivate me to construct more defenses."

Third Student

"What about impression management theory? This theory asserts that we are more concerned with appearing consistent than being internally consistent as cognitive dissonance theory would propose."

Second Student

"That is a possible explanation but I think that an advertisement designed to create cognitive consonance would probably be equally effective in helping a person maintain the desired social impression."

Third Student

"That's probably correct."

First Student

"What about the Awareness-Trial-Reinforcement Model?"

Third Student

"All this model proposes is that advertisements may work in three ways. The third one, reinforcement, simply states that we are reinforced by advertisements which provide positive feedback as to the correctness of our decisions."

Instruction E_2 -- Deal with the hypothesis that advertising elicits trial behavior

First Student

"Now that we have some conceptual support for the first hypothesis, what about the assertion that advertising elicits trial behavior?"

Feedback E_2

Second Student

"I think that we will have to speak to two types of trial behavior, i.e. low and high risk behavior."

First Student

"That is correct. If we are talking about low risk situations, the ATR model has some explanatory value. The second component of that model appears to apply to situations where a person may have a set of acceptable brands. If a preferred brand is unavailable, then the person may try as a second brand the best advertised brand."

Second Student

"In the situation of risk taking, Pluralistic Ignorance, Emergent Norm, and Pruitts Release Theory are all possible sources of explanation."

Third Student

"I believe that Pluralistic Ignorance theory says that we are ignorant of the willingness of others to take chances. In fact, we believe others to be more conservative than they actually are. Perhaps advertising works by showing that others are more risky than the viewer might have believed. This might induce the viewer into using a product because the viewer now sees that other people actually use what was thought to be a socially taboo item."

First Student

"Relatedly, Pruitts Release Theory might predict that advertising serves to release the viewer from inhibitions, freeing the viewer to express her/his basic propensities."

Second Student

"And Emergent Norm Theory proponents might assert that advertising helps establish a new norm by indicating or giving the impression that other people accept this behavior as normal."

Instruction E_3 -- Low Involvement

First Student

"It seems apparent that these theories are very similar but with subtle differences that may or may not have implications for mass

advertising. Why don't we talk about the hypothesis that says advertisement may work in low involvement situations?"

Feedback E_3

Second Student

"You may recall that Krugman's Low-Involvement Learning Model proposes that advertisements may provide a perceptional or conditioned set. This set allows the organism to act automatically thus freeing the person to think about more important problems."

Third Student

"The first phase of the ATR model also applies."

First Student

"And Broadbent's Filter model proposes that we have a single communication channel that has a limited capacity for processing information. The selection of information is partially determined by stimulus factors (intensity, novelty, etc.), biological importance, psychological importance, and conditioned sets among other things. Advertising could work to open the channel for the stimulus features of the products and their packaging."

Instruction E_4 -- Opinion leader hypothesis

Second Student

"Fine. Now, what about the opinion leader hypothesis?"

Feedback E_4

First Student

"The Two-Step Flow Model asserts that many messages pass through opinion leaders. Furthermore, research indicates that some people are asked for their opinions more often than others, and these same people tend to be exposed to mass media to a greater extent. Advertising may actually work on the opinion leaders who pass along the message."

Second Student

"Relatedly, reference group theory says that I look to others for information as well as rules of conduct. Perhaps testimonials and endorsement advertisements seek to provide a model from a person's reference group."

Instruction E_5 -- Emotional or Rational

First Student

"For purposes of closure, why don't we contrast the attitude modification to the attitude education hypotheses. In other words, do advertisements persuade with evidence or do they use persuasive devices? Would either work?"

Feedback E_5

Second Student

"Let's review the evidence. What about emotional appeals?"

Third Student

"I often see advertisers use guilt and fear appeals. For instance, life insurance advertisements threaten us and make us feel guilty when they project an image of our families attempting to survive after our deaths. Fear is the motive lying behind ads for smoke detectors, fire alarms, and even mouthwash, soap, and deodorants. Economic disaster is the theme of the Fram oil filter ad. 'Pay me now or pay me later'."

First Student

"And nostalgia is utilized in syrup, cookies, and other food advertisements."

Second Student

"Sex is the theme in the English Leather ads which say 'My men wear English Leather or nothing at all'. Car ads also make extensive use of the sex theme."

First Student

"There do appear to be many examples of advertisements that appeal to the emotions rather than logic. But what about the so called objective advertisements?"

Second Student

"If you are referring to the advertisements in which experimental tests are performed, I would still contend that these are used to modify and not educate. For instance, Tide may clean better than the comparison soap but the so called researchers say nothing about the sampling-assignment operations, and nothing about the experimental controls, etc."

Third Student

"Yes, and the use of vague language is evident in advertisements. Examples include 'Listerine fights bad breath,' 'for virtually spotless dishes use Cascade,' 'Black and Decker just might be the finest saw for the money,' product X makes hair thicker, 'Magnavox gives you more,' 'Cheer gives you a whiter wash,' and 'milk is a natural'. All the vague terms (underlined) are utilized in an attempt to lead the viewer to the desired impression."

First Student

"OK, the evidence seems to indicate that advertisers may seek to educate but they are using techniques of attitude modification. Of course, it behoves all communicators to say education is their goal even though they may have a more sinister goal."

Second Student

"Of course, to be fair, we do realize that advertisers use methods to improve attention, comprehension, and retention. For instance, the use of mnemonics (jingles, etc.) help people recall. This would be a legitimate part of an educational attempt."

Instruction F -- Evaluate and make the decision

First Student

"Now that we know something about the various hypotheses and theories, why don't we apply the constraints, assumptions, and facts selecting the two or three most appropriate hypotheses."

Feedback F

Second Student

"Since we learned that the people in the target market are primarily convenience shoppers, and therefore not concerned with brand names, the low involvement hypothesis seems most applicable. If these people are interested in minimizing the energy expended in shopping, ads might capitalize on this tendency by providing the appropriate perceptual set."

First Student

"Yes, and ads might also elicit trial behavior in those people who find their 'usual' brand unavailable."

Third Student

"Perhaps, ads could also be useful in creating a brand preference. It is possible to educate these people into the value or 'convenience' of using a reliable brand."

Instruction G -- Analysis and synthesis

First Student

"OK, what is our recommendation? Should we have the executive try advertising? If so, how do we determine whether or not television advertisement is effective? Do we have any recommendations on the type of ad?"

Make your recommendations and propose several research designs to be used for evaluation. A design is a strategy or plan to be utilized in testing the hypotheses.

Feedback G

Second Student

"I suppose that we could use a simple pretest-posttest design. That is, we could measure sales first, advertise, and then measure again."

Third Student

"What about using a control group, i.e. a comparison group that does not receive the advertising message?"

First Student

"I suppose we might even consider the Solomon Four Group Design. This design, of course, provides for some groups that do not receive pretests, etc."

Second Student

"No, the Solomon design is not needed since our pretest consists of using archival data and, therefore, correction for pretest effects is not needed."

First Student

"You are absolutely right! What about using the reversal and multiple group designs often used in behavior modification evaluation?"

Third Student

"Are you speaking of a design that requires the establishment of base line data, application of the treatment (advertisement), measurement of new base line, and then the removal of the treatment?"

First Student

"Yes, and applying this same approach to a series of locations as in the multiple group approach."

Instruction H -- Select the best design

Feedback H

Second Student

"I think that we can agree that the final suggestion is the most viable approach. But are we sure that we wish to recommend advertising?"

First Student

"I think that there is enough logic, if not evidence, to support an affirmative response."

Third Student

"Yes, I agree!"

Second Student

"OK! Should we make recommendations on the type of ad?"

First Student

"I think that this should be left up to the advertising experts. Don't you?"

Second and Third Students

"Yes!"

Instruction I

Does the plan appear to be legal, moral, practical, and economical?

Feedback I

Second Student

"It certainly meets with the objective! But what about its practicality?"

First Student

"Since the company will need to invest in advertising in only three or four communities, I would see this as a very realistic and economical plan."

Third Student

"It will be up to the advertisers to make the advertisements comply with the truth in advertising laws."

First Student

"What about the issue you two are avoiding? What about the morality of the plan?"

Third Student

"I don't think that we are capable of resolving that issue. We might suggest that the advertisements employ devices to assist in attention, comprehension, and retention. In this way we avoid the ethical problem that might result from the use of attitudinal modification techniques."

First and Second Students

"Agreed!"

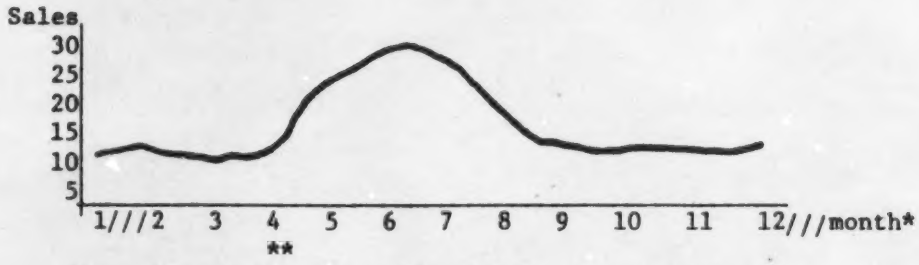
Instruction J -- Implement and check results

First Student

"Let's report to the peanut butter executive and make our recommendations."

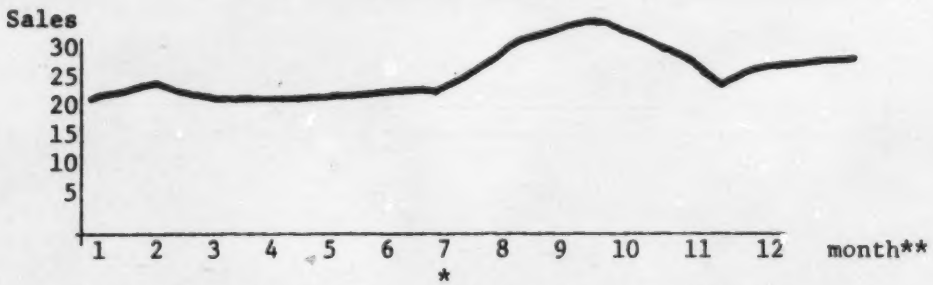
The student subsequently submitted a report to the executive. Needless to say, the executive was impressed with the product and decided to implement the plan. As suggested, he decided to pick three key communities providing advertising to each of the communities in sequence. He also removed the advertising in sequence. The results are below:

Community A



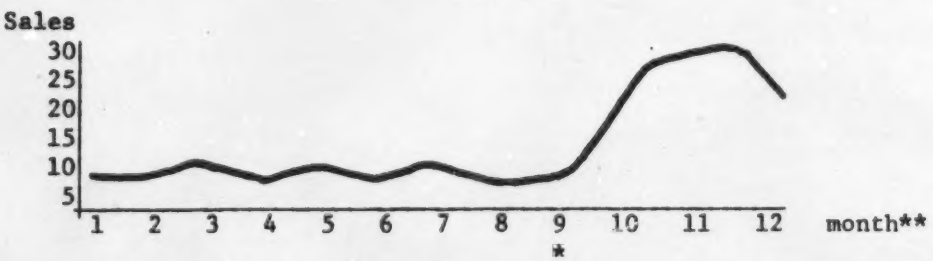
*Base line data were collected for three months
**Advertising began and continued for two months

Community B



*Advertising began the seventh month and continued for two months.
**Base line data were collected for six months

Community C



*Advertising began the ninth month and continued for two months
**Base line data were collected for eight months.

First Student

"Did the advertisement work? Which hypothesis was best supported by data?"

Feedback J

Second Student

"Yes, advertisement worked! Each time it was applied sales increased."

Third Student

"And because sales decreased when the advertisement was removed, one would have to conclude that the effect is transitory in nature."

First Student

"I agree! Advertising seemed to direct the buyers' attention more than leading to any deep or permanent attitude change."

Second Student

"Of course, one would have to complete a content analysis of the ads themselves before any definitive conclusions might be drawn!"

First and Third Students

"Right!"

Debriefing

You have now experienced some of the problem solving activities in which social psychologists often find themselves. As you may have observed, they often find themselves flying by the seats of their pants. However, they are usually capable of putting their views to the empirical test. In fact, this is one of the major distinctions between psychologists and people who do not adopt the behavioral scientist philosophy.

Epilogue

Two years later finds our elated executive raking in the profits. Not only is he wealthier than before but he now has a very attractive blond at his side. I wonder what advertising principle he used in obtaining this prize?

But what about our students? They appear to have gone their own ways. As is typically the case, they have found much value in their psychological training. It may be only a rumor but I understand that one student is making a mint in his cathouse in Mexico. Of course, the other two were not quite as fortunate.